Excerpt on Enterprise Partnering from the IPT Learning Campus (CD-ROM)

Enterprise Partnering

Enterprise refers to the program office and its major stakeholders who are interested and involved in the program, the product, and the IPT. This would include the supporting infrastructure, higher authority, the customer, and suppliers. For example, the typical DoN program office IPT enterprise might include its PEO or Systems Commander, the ASN(RDA), OPNAV, supporting Systems Commands, field activities, Fleet representatives, and prime contractors. *Enterprise partnering* represents a set of informal working relationships between stakeholders and the IPT to support the team objectives and the enterprise's goals.

The term *partnering* refers to the intent of two or more organizations to work together to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of a common goal, and to reduce the costs of disagreements. This is not something that can be done instantly. Like trust, partnering takes two parties and must be developed over time. Trust, ease of communications, and a thorough understanding of each other take patience and usually must be tested.

Enterprise partnering to develop good relations has two parts. First is the identification of mutual goals between the IPT and the stakeholder so that both parties can work toward the success of those goals and collaborate for their mutual benefit. For example, clear benefits could be improved product performance, reduced schedule, or reduced acquisition cost.

Another partnering benefit could come from reducing the cost of disagreements between the government and the prime contractor through the use of alternative dispute resolution (ADR). Specific suggestions for partnering to reduce dispute costs are provided in the references for enterprise partnering listed below. Another benefit is the learning that occurs from listening and working with multiple stakeholders. Enterprise partnering generates better understanding of the enterprise and how it operates.

A second aspect of enterprise partnering is finding a senior manager in the IPT's chain of command who will act as a champion, especially while the team is new and may need senior level support. A third aspect is working with the infrastructure to ensure good support for team needs. Because of downsizing and changing procedures throughout the acquisition system, infrastructure personnel are frequently overworked.

Enterprise Partnering for Program Success

When two IPTs need to work together to achieve their individual objectives but do not, there can be a cost to the acquisition system. The lack of full teamwork among enterprise stakeholders can slow down the effectiveness of IPTs in meeting program commitments. This may be due to lack of resources or time, making it impossible to support all acquisition programs. Sometimes it is due to lack of communication between the IPT and various organizations throughout the enterprise.

The cost may be in terms of frustration, poor communication, missed opportunities, or program delays. Each party is doing what it feels is right, and does its own thing in the best possible manner. Enterprise partnering helps to minimize and prevent such situations from occurring.

Observation indicates that the squeaky wheel gets the grease. An IPT that wants to get maximum support from its enterprise takes deliberate actions to develop good working relations with all of its stakeholders. This creates a network to support the team and its program as the product is developed. In other words, enterprise partnering means working with stakeholders, keeping them informed, seeking their advice, *helping them when they need it,* and seeking help when the team needs it.

In one sense it is common sense, in a second, it is relationship management, in a third it is good marketing. Whatever it is, it works. Good relations are much easier to establish *before* problems arise than *afterwards*. Partnering takes time and effort, fortunately the payoff is more than warranted where there is a clear connection between or among organizational stakeholders and the vision/task of the IPT.

An IPT can develop a formal plan to partner or it can come to an informal agreement on what needs to be done and get all team members to develop relationships with their colleagues in the infrastructure. The danger of an informal approach is it can easily get lost in the day-to-day pressure of work. A formal plan would provide for periodic reports on the status of relationships with key stakeholders and discussions on actions needed to be taken. It can be an illuminating experience for a team to identify all stakeholders that it deals with (typically twenty to forty) and to prioritize them in terms of threats and opportunities as seen by the IPT. The team can then develop a plan to work closely with the most important stakeholders to ensure continuous support for their program.

Enterprise Partnering for a Champion

As noted in the CNA study (DiTrapani and Geithner 1996), *Getting the Most Out of Integrated Product Teams*, (IPTs), industry found that the existence of a senior executive or champion can pay big dividends in team performance. When IPTs are initially set up, there are a great number of concerns, problems, issues, and hesitations on the part of team members and also the surrounding infrastructure. Questions concerning the reason for their existence, how effective they will be, their cost, exactly what authority, responsibility and accountability they will have, and how that will impact the *normal operation* of the rest of the organization can create a number of questions and pressures on a young team. A senior executive may need to step in and look into problems and issues and provide effective high-level defense and explanations for the rationale and the authority of the IPT.

Other issues can arise as to the style of team leadership, specific boundaries of the charter, and the scope of responsibilities and authority of the team as seen from the surrounding enterprise and its key stakeholders. When this occurs, a senior executive can provide invaluable help to the team leader in dealing with other enterprise stakeholders

and internal problems. The senior manager knows the politics and culture of the enterprise and can help the team learn how to get things done.

Sounding Board

A team champion can also be a sounding board for the team leader as well as for the team. If resources become a concern, then a key senior executive can break down barriers and provide objective recommendations on resource needs and priorities. Another area of contribution could be to make sure that objective decisions are made by the team, and that the correct balance between short and long-term enterprise and program needs is maintained.

Issues arising between the infrastructure and the IPT may develop, and if they are escalated to higher levels in the organization, the IPT may need senior level support. During program evolution, problems can arise which are beyond the ability of the team or the team leader to solve, and therefore need to be escalated to higher authority.

Sensibility Check

The executive level manager can take an objective look and ensure that the strategy and vision of the team are consistent with, and supportive of, the vision and strategy of the enterprise. If the team becomes subjected to excessive oversight and/or micro-management from other organizations, it may need to call upon executive level defense mechanisms. Where executive level management ignores an IPT or provides *negative support*, it is extremely difficult for the IPT to accomplish the job intended.

Occasionally, IPTs may be initiated by decree where they don't make sense, and then left to survive on their own. If this occurs, it endangers the whole concept of IPTs as seen by the workforce and essentially sets back the progress of IPTs to support the acquisition process. In conclusion, IPTs, particularly young ones, may find themselves in strong need of a champion in their corner at the senior management level.

Enterprise Partnering for Infrastructure Support

The infrastructure is that part of the enterprise that provides support to, and interacts with, the IPT. It includes the functional codes where a matrix organization is utilized, legal, contracts, and personnel, as well as the budget, finance, test and evaluation, and sponsor communities.

With some exceptions, most program offices, and hence their IPTs, do not own all of their people, nor do they perform all of the support functions. However, the effectiveness of the IPT is highly dependent upon the quality, cooperation, responsiveness, and consistency of the infrastructure support.

The infrastructure supplies a special expertise and maintains a long-term, high quality capability in its discipline. It acts as a reservoir of professional talent available on an as-needed basis. In addition, the infrastructure may serve as a second opinion, and may have final authority over some areas. IPTs can develop tunnel vision with respect to their objectives and the enterprise infrastructure can act as a balance. Where the infrastructure

is highly competent, management is supportive, and a good partnering arrangement has been established with an IPT, great value can be gained by both parties. At the other extreme, if either the infrastructure or the IPT is non-supportive of the other, narrow in perspective, rule-bound, or operates only according to its own objectives, it can significantly hamper an IPT's effectiveness and thereby its program success.

One approach an IPT can take relative to its infrastructure is partnering and cooperation. It may be useful to set up a series of meetings or even offsites with various parts of the infrastructure to create a means by which communications, mutual understanding and cooperation can be built. This, of course, takes time, energy, and the right attitude on both sides. Both formal and informal interactions between the team and components of the infrastructure should be open, professional, and done in the best interest of both parties wherever possible. Each party needs to really understand the other party's priorities, assumptions, concerns and belief systems.

One barrier is the different objectives or goals of the IPT and the infrastructure organizations. While there is a great deal of overlap, they are not identical. While the IPT is looking to achieve its objectives, the infrastructure has a responsibility to support the IPT and also to meet its own organizational responsibilities. It is not a matter of either one being right or wrong, it is a matter of a built-in structural difference in objectives and perceptions that can create friction.

When good partnering relationships are created early in the life of an IPT, a lot of synergy occurs in which the IPT has increased performance and the infrastructure has increased professionalism and learning. Most problems arise because of incomplete or inadequate communication on the part of both parties.

Major barriers can also arise from different views toward empowerment, roles and responsibility, career paths, performance appraisals, and training. While most of these problems are typical of any matrix-structured organization, they can be resolved only if both sides recognize their ultimate responsibility is to the long-term acquisition process and its immediate products.

Excerpt on Team Collaboration from the IPT Learning Campus (CD-ROM)

Team Collaboration

Many observers of teams in action equate the capability and performance of teams with their degree of collaboration. Collaboration has many interpretations. One rather popular one is that given by Kayser (1994), which states that *collaboration is close communication and sharing of understanding with no hidden agendas.* Schrage (1990) says *that collaboration is a purposive relationship and an act of shared creation and/or shared discovery*. Collaboration is a desire or a need to either solve a problem, create something, or to discover something within a set of constraints such as limited expertise, time, or money.

When teams are performing routine and predictable tasks, there is usually little need for collaboration. When they are creating something that has never existed before, as is the case with many, if not most acquisition programs, they need the full power of all team members working together. This is where collaboration facilitates success.

One interesting aspect of collaboration is that it often requires play. Though the word may sound odd here, play is exactly what it is. As team members attack a given problem or issue, they need to play with it in their minds, then share concepts and ideas and perspectives. This interaction is very much like play in the sense that different things are considered and tried before specific conclusions are drawn. Successful teams take this play very seriously, and focus in at the right time on the solution they need.

IPT members collaborate because, as individuals, they cannot deal effectively with the problems, challenges and decisions that face them. The complexity, dynamics, and uncertainty of the problems faced by acquisition teams in acquiring modern weapon systems is simply too much of a challenge for any one person. The benefit of collaboration is an increase in team power to solve problems, make decisions, and manage complexity. Collaboration becomes a necessary technique to master this unknown and complex environment, and to achieve the required gain in team performance.

Benefits of Collaboration

The major benefit of collaboration is the increased ability of an IPT to be innovative, identify and solve problems, make decisions, and implement its actions to get results. In other words, increasing the effectiveness of the *four major processes*. This large gain in team power comes from the collaborative interactions among team members by taking advantage of their diversity, competence and the mutual reinforcement of ideas and knowledge. Much of the benefits of IPTs derive from team collaboration. When people work closely together with a common purpose they learn from each other, generate new ideas, minimize bias and maximize objectivity, and create a collective judgment and perspective that is significantly better than each acting separately.

A side benefit of collaboration is the strong personal feelings and rewards that individuals feel after working with their colleagues in successful programs, programs

where everyone contributes to the product and recognizes the significant gain from collaboration. There is almost a feeling of euphoria among team members after a highly successful effort.

The power of collaboration arises through the relationships among team members and the processes they use to produce results. Each team is unique in terms of its individuals and the existing and needed relationships to produce maximum results. Team leaders and team members, through experience, self-evaluation and sensitivity to their teammates, can develop a sense of what is right and what will work for their team.

Many things can be understood from an objective, distant view. The ability to *take yourself out of yourself, and look at yourself* can be extremely helpful in understanding how your team members see you and why they may interpret and react to certain acts or communication patterns. While the ability to work effectively in teams can be learned, it cannot really be taught. Each individual must take it upon themselves to learn and adapt their behavior to meet their own and other team member's needs. This is the foundation for strong collaboration.

To observe a team's level of collaboration, listen carefully to the various discussions that go on among team members. One of the simplest indicators is the number of times that team members use the word "*I*" versus the number of times they use the word "*we*" during team discussions. Some conversations tend to indicate non-collaboration while others reinforce the collaborative abilities of the team.

For example, non-collaboration is indicated when team members avoid discussion of sensitive areas, or give in by accommodation instead of having a serious discussion on important topics. If strong-willed team members force a decision without much team discussion, they are subverting the collaborative capability of the team. Even compromise can represent a form of non-collaboration since it is frequently the easy way out.

Tone can be very significant in terms of its impact on collaboration. For example, a non-threatening tone is encouraging, a threatening tone generates anxiety, and a boring tone creates a feeling of separateness and non-interest, thereby reducing the desire to work with that person.

Indications of collaboration include participants expressing specific problems and needs, then making sure that all team members understood the meaning and context of the problems. Team members that work to combine mutual interests of other team members, or even other teams, are sincerely trying to create a collaborative environment. When team members know their own, and their colleague's strengths and weaknesses and actively orchestrate the team interactions and assignments to get the best team results—that is collaboration!

Disagreements, heavy discussions, and group-gropes are all part of good collaboration, as is inquiry, dialogue, and active listening. The only constraint is that these activities are

focused on a common task and team members show a respect for each other. Team members who analyze consequences with an objective view of looking at the pluses, the minuses and the interesting (PMI) aspects (de Bono 1982, 11) make a contribution to collaboration. The Teams At Work CD from Harvard Business School (1996) provides additional information.

Conditions for Collaboration

First, there must be a desire and willingness on the part of team members to work together to achieve a common purpose. Second, the environment should be conducive to effective interaction and collaboration. One often thinks that good communication is sufficient for collaboration. Unfortunately, while the transfer of information and the art of good conversation are both necessary, they are usually insufficient.

The third condition is one called shared space. It could be a model of the problem at hand, or a whiteboard. Shared spaces are used by teams to throw out ideas, sketches, numbers, words, processes and symbols so that everyone in the room see the same thing. They represent a framework upon which team members can build a common progression toward solutions.

Recognizing that every IPT is unique in terms of its individual members, task, and environment, there are nevertheless certain basic characteristics that will help facilitate collaboration among team members. Borrowing from Schrage's *Shared Minds* (1990), the following lectures; Communication, Shared space, Team member competence, Common vision/clear task, Environment, and Decision Criteria discuss the impact of the topics on collaboration:

Communication

There is a significant difference between communication and collaboration. Communication is usually thought of as *transmitting information*. The problem is that this usually does not include the context and meaning of the information. Meaning is essential for the receiver to fully understand what is being communicated and to be able to generate the insights needed for effective action. The objective in collaboration is to use symbols, words, models, and non-verbal expressions to construct relevant meanings out of the combination of information, experience, intuition, and professional expertise.

Thus, as Schrage points out, the act of collaboration is an act of *shared creation and/or shared discovery*. If the answer to a problem is already known, or the decision and actions clear, the team leader may well operate from a platform of individual charm, autocratic authority, or expertise, and the team members follow accordingly. In fact, most large organizations handle routine patterns and daily events in a very effective manner. On the other hand, in acquiring new weapon systems with rapidly changing and complex technology, the effort becomes one of exploration of possibilities and managing risk rather than easy, rule-based decision making. Collaboration is a technique for reducing complexity and generating creativity.

Shared Space

Shared space is more important than is usually recognized because people tend to think normal conversation and communication are adequate. Unfortunately, a word or a phrase, an idea or a concept stated at one time is easily forgotten or distorted within several minutes as the conversation rolls on. And, if it is remembered, it is remembered in the way it was heard, not necessarily the way the sender intended. One solution to this problem is *shared space*.

Shared space is anything that keeps information in front of the team while they are interacting, and records their results. With shared space, everyone can observe, manipulate, suggest and address the same, common concept. This overcomes the problems of jargon and functional disciplines seeing the world differently, that is, having a different *mental model* or view of the world. Shared spaces should be dynamic, capable of being changed and updated, and capable of being frozen in time to create a chronological history of team progress.

Shared space should be interactive, adaptable and continuously accept new information. Shared space can be as simple as flipcharts with butcher paper, electronic whiteboards, to sophisticated computer three-dimensional projections or groupware systems. In any case, teams need a common place to put their ideas, concerns, and issues for all others to see, and to serve as a focal point for team attention (Schrage 1989, 95).

Shared spaces close the gap between language and symbols. Some people learn and think better using words, others think more in terms of concepts and visual imagery. Unfortunately, our culture tends to keep words and images separate. The combination of thinking in words, concepts, and images is valuable for developing insights and new ways to solve problems. Maps, pictures, ideas, and three-dimensional dynamic models are also helpful. They serve as common reference objects for team members to discuss, analyze and contemplate. Team members should recognize that just as language shapes the process of our thought, shared spaces influence the process of collaboration.

Team Member Competence

Although obvious, team member competence is sometimes overlooked. Team members must possess good experience and deep knowledge of their individual disciplines for collaboration to be effective. Lack of such experience and disciplined knowledge makes it difficult to collaborate effectively. Navy and Marine Corps IPTs rarely experience this problem. The typical group of twenty program office team members has about 200 years of experience in the acquisition system. [Note: This statistic is based on facilitation of more that 50 program office offsites over the past 15 years.]

To get the best results from collaboration, all knowledge areas of a problem or decision must be represented on the team. Where this does not exist, inviting subject matter experts (SMEs) to the meetings can cover the missing areas. However, SMEs'

relationships with team members will not be the same as relationships among team members. This may or may not hinder collaboration, depending upon the team, the individual, and the task at hand. In general, if the task is relatively free of emotional content there will be less difficulty.

Common Vision/Clear Task

A shared vision and a clear task serve as a focal point to guide the team through collaborative discussions. All groups of people have a tendency to wander off track. IPTs are no exception. Having a clear objective keeps the process from being an open-ended jam session. This constraint allows the team to wander between exploration and inquiry and convergence to the end goal. All of these processes are needed, and each can be overdone. The facilitator or team leader should keep the proper balance among them. Effective collaboration requires a clear objective as well as the participant relationships and the need to explore.

During collaboration, differences are expected and should be encouraged. Even conflict is useful if it is constructive and for the purpose of bringing out different opinions. However, if conflict becomes destructive with the parties unable to understand or accept each other, long-term animosities may be created which damage team performance. Such conflict may be the result of differences that are not clear, even to the individuals. For instance, there are five levels at which conflict can show itself: Conflict over facts, methods, goals, values and belief systems. What happens is that people argue over facts when the real differences are over methods. Or they argue over methods when the real problem is different goals, and so on down the chain. When this occurs, the team leader can intervene and either move the conflict out of the meeting or take it down to the real level of disagreement to promote resolution.

Remember that collaboration is a process to achieve a result, not an end in itself. Even when a team is brainstorming for ideas, they need to have a problem or an objective in mind. A clear vision, purpose, objective, strategy, and approach all ensure a team's collaborative process converges.

Environment

The physical environment has a significant impact on the degree of collaboration that occurs among team members. Proximity and number of meeting rooms, the equipment in the meeting room, the shape of the table, the number of whiteboards, and other means of sharing ideas all play a low visibility, but important, role in supporting team collaboration. The culture of the organization determines the acceptability of informal discussions around the coffeepot and other ad-hoc meetings. What may appear to be idle conversation may turn out to be the most important learning of the day for team members. Thus the team leader and higher authority must give the team *the freedom to learn* as well as the freedom to act.

Other ways that the enterprise environment impacts team collaboration include the acceptable level of risk that the support functions are willing to take and the reward and recognition system for team performance. The level of team member empowerment may

depend on individuals outside of the team. Training and development, the rotation of team members, turnover of team leaders, career moves, and the receptivity of higher authority to innovative approaches create an infrastructure within which the IPT must find the freedom and motivation to achieve a high level of collaboration. An IPTs' enterprise structure can support and amplify its performance or dampen and stifle it. Competent, dedicated people are necessary for high performance—they are not sufficient.

Decision Criteria

It is a common myth that high performing teams make decisions by unanimous agreement on decisions. While this may be highly desirable and certainly occurs from time to time, it is far more probable that there will be significant differences and views on the downstream results of major decisions. What high performing teams do is to ensure close and thorough collaboration of all team members. This results in all views being aired and openly discussed, keeping in mind that the team objective is the sole criterion for evaluation.

A highly collaborative team may go to extreme efforts to make sure those who disagree can at least accept the decision as being palatable and agree to support team efforts in its implementation. This is the meaning of a consensus. If such support is not forthcoming and the decision is a major one for the program, the team leader may have to remove individuals from the team. While this is always undesirable, and done only as a last resort, the alternative may create a team with divisive splits in attitudes, belief systems, and approaches to meeting its responsibilities. This is not a team. This cost may be considerably higher than the cost of changing people. Often this possibility may be identified and prevented during the early period of team start-up when the shared vision/approach are developed.

Barriers to Collaboration

When forming an IPT, the organization recognizes that the task is too complex for any one person. Cross-functional team members represent different ways of thinking that easily come into conflict. This diversity is a great advantage of IPTs if handled properly; a disaster if not. Specialists have their own jargon and priorities that may conflict with other specialist's beliefs. Thus, information gaps and *tunnel vision* among team members may make collaboration difficult. This can become a serious problem if team members are not open to new ideas, or if there are other interpersonal issues within the team.

Each team participant will also have a different value and belief set that can cause problems. While the basic values of the acquisition workforce are similar, the beliefs of individuals can be very different. Divergent values or beliefs can, like thinking styles, be healthy, or life threatening to team performance, depending on how well the team has come together.

Other barriers are the degree of collocation of the team members and team size. Team Size, respectively. Large teams and/or separated team members hinder open communication and the establishment of interpersonal relations. Serious conflict among

two or more team participants can prevent collaboration because of the stress and bad feelings that it creates. Collaboration, to be most effective, needs to be accompanied by positive feelings of sharing and success.

Lack of supporting facilities and/or technology can be a hidden barrier. The team may not realize the contribution adequate facilities and shared space can make to team productivity and interaction effectiveness.